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ABSTRACT

After considering evidence of the importance of television in the lives of children, the background and directions of the visual literacy movement are explored. The effects of television on the child are then considered within a framework based on the work of Piaget, whose studies suggest there must be significant differences in the way television programs are perceived by children at different stages of cognitive development. New uses of television in the classroom and new directions for television research are discussed. (AA)

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"TELEVISION AS TEACHER: THE IMPACTS OF TELEVISION ON THE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN"

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"I believe television is going to be the test of the modern world, and that in this new opportunity to see beyond our range of vision, we shall discover either a new and unbearable disturbance of the general peace or a saving radiance in the sky."

E. B. White, Harper's Magazine, 1938.

"Teachers are unacquainted with the use and application of the various school apparatus."

Connecticut Common School Journal, 1840.

"The world is full of apparatus--but the teacher, in times past, has been too slothful, or too dogmatical, even to point to it."

American Institute of Instruction, 1830.

I. TELEVISION'S CHILDREN: DO WE REALLY KNOW THEM?

Many of our collective images of education seem hopelessly dusty with chalk, noisy with clattering lunch trays, pungent with the new term's floor wax. The glass palaces of our suburbs and the scarred fortresses of our cities have etched our minds with a lifetime of school textures, noises and smells. When we think of education we think of School Boards and Teachers' Associations; when we think of training we think of the developing external and internal methods to establish accountability; when we think of learning we think of Centers, Institutes and government-sponsored studies; when we think of curriculum we think of Committees and Guides. For most of us, education is synonymous with going to school.

Kids, meanwhile, have been watching television.

There is growing evidence that television has indeed become a second school system. The A.C. Nielson Company recently completed its twenty-fifth annual report on American television viewing. Nearly 68.5 million households watch television on a single set; 28.4 million homes have two or more sets. Most Americans watch programs on color sets. We average 6 hours, 14 minutes of television viewing each day; women are the heaviest viewers; for an average of thirty-seven hours a week (women, 55+). Children ages 2-5 watch twenty-six hours a week; 6-11 watch nearly twenty-four hours each

week.[1]

Because we all watch television we know all about television. Daily, over our nearly one thousand television channels, we absorb a quantity of information that would have sated our ancestors for a year or more. But while we all watch television, we criticize it roundly and vociferously for its mediocrity, its overcommercialism and its pervasive encouragement of acquisitive, materialistic values.

The criticisms are important, and they escalate daily in the thoughtful and occasionally strident debates (usually in print) over the medium's role as a serious underachiever. Many thoughtful observers, including many of us at this Conference, may be convinced that the medium--by virtue of its omnipresence, glamour, and authority--has become the central hub around which revolves the wheel of all other aspects of our lives, political, economic, social, psychological. I increasingly believe that anyone who studies television seriously cannot escape the same conclusion.

In the context of our discussion as English educators, researchers and policy scientists, the television image and its incredible impact on the development of the child must command our most serious attention. To many observers, television's images have become more important to viewers than the realities that are represented by the images. Edmund Carpenter asserts, in Oh What a Blow the Phantom Gave Me, An Antrhopologist in the Electronic World, that electricity has "angelized us." It has made us angels, "not angels in the

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[1]Nielson, Television 75, A.C. Neilson Co., 1975.

Sunday School sense of being good or having wings, but spirits freed from flesh, capable of instant transportation anywhere."[2] Carpenter goes on to say, "the moment we pick up a phone, we're nowhere in space, everywhere at once."[3]

Television's messages and identities, then, tend to become more important than our own, except in the narrow corridors of our personal experience. How do we "capture" television if we are to understand it, if we are to re-order it for our purposes?

Perhaps at this point I'd better admit that I speak to you today as a drop-out. Not a drop-out of some chalk-lined classrooms, but a drop-out from the profession of teacher of English, at least in terms many of you find comfortable. In 1968, after six years of high school teaching, I traded my desk cluttered with mimeo stencils and student poetry for the "experience" of graduate school, and a new career in higher education. I have rich memories of my attendance at at least four NCTE Conventions, of conducting pre-Conference Seminars on film education and visual literacy, of the overwhelming book displays and the warmth of NCTE staff Bob Hogan, Bill Scannell, Dick Adler, and many others who made the transition from my world as a Department Chairman in an upstate New York school system to their agendas and resources instructive in the fullest sense of the word.

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[2]Robert Lewis Shayon, "Will TV Be Different Tomorrow," (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Gazette, Feb., 1973, p. 18.).

[3]ibid.

In this paper I should like to bridge from my opening scenario on television's well-documented presence and what is to many television's failed promise, to a more systematic examination of television's impacts, and they are plural, on children. My review is deeply rooted in the tradition of social/psychological research, and particularly in Jean Piaget's theories of child development.[4] My map of the landscape will use Piaget as a starting point. My intent will be to explore television's largely untapped potential to explore social learnings as well as cognitive development. But before we explore the ways television teaches many lessons, it may be useful to take a closer look at the visual landscape which suggests new agendas for today's young television viewer.

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[4]Jean Piaget, The Psychology of Intelligence. New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1950.

II. THE LANGUAGE OF VISION
TEACHING AND LEARNING IN A UNIVERSE OF DISCOURSE

Many educators are becoming aware that a totally literate citizen dwelling in what Marshall McLuhan calls, "a global village," needs skills in both non-verbal and verbal language. Colin Cherry has noted succinctly that there are "simply not enough words to express the subtlety of every shade of thought. If we had words for everything, their numbers would be astronomically large and beyond our powers of memory or our skill to use them."[5] Man, therefore, resorts to non-verbal behavior, communications involving either sight or sound or both, but not words.

In this context, pictures have provided man with a logical spectrum of meaning closed to him as long as he depended upon verbal vocabularies. Picture events (photographs, films, television programs, sculpture, and paintings) literally gave man a measure of control over the entire natural world that he could communicate to others. Now he could isolate and reactivate at will the power of animals, or of other men, by virtue of his own artistic talents.

Paul Wendt, a general semanticist, has argued that semanticists need to devote more critical attention to the language of pictures, and how that language system conveys meaning. Wendt notes that "Pictures are. . . surrogates for experience. As such they may be

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[5]Colin Cherry, On Human Communication, New York: John Wiley, 1961, p. 69.

said to be closer to extensional meaning than intentional meaning. At least their position lies in between these two. . . pictures are a language in themselves. They are not merely limited representations of reality operating within narrow limits of expression. In the contrary photography is a very flexible medium with a wide range whose limits have not yet been sighted."[6]

This awareness of the potential of the photograph has led in recent years to serious research and practice in an area some have termed "visual literacy" or "media literacy." Visual literacy programs, initiated by some of us as part of a program development and research activity at the Eastman Kodak Company in the late 1960's, were built on the philosophy that the rich and varied visual experiences of children, including but not limited to the nearly seven thousand hours of television viewing before entering kindergarten, were not utilized or even recognized by the teacher, particularly the teacher of language in the initial experience of the "hard school."

The International Conference on Visual Literacy agreed upon the following definition in 1968: "Visual Literacy refers to a group of vision competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences. The development of these competencies is fundamental to normal human learning. When developed, they enable a visually literate person to discriminate and interpret the visible actions, objects, and symbols, natural or man-made, that he encounters in his

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[6]Paul Wendt, "The Language of Pictures," in The Use and Misuse of Language, S. I. Hayakawa (ed.), New York: Fawcett Press, 1962, p. 175.

environment. Through the creative use of these competencies, he is able to communicate with others. Through the appreciative use of these competencies, he is able to comprehend and appreciate the masterworks of visual communications."[7]

Especially after hearing that definition, teachers may well ask, in what ways is the visually literate learner's behavior different? As might be expected, visual behavior parallels verbal behavior because a visually literate child can "read" visual language with skill. He can "write," that is, compose visual statements with skill, hopefully with eloquence. He can translate from visual language to verbal language and visa versa. He has a basic understanding of the grammar of visual language and some perception that it parallels verbal language. He would also be familiar with and somewhat skilled in the use of the tools of visual communication. And finally, he would develop a critical sensibility toward visual communication.

To place these definitions in context, a triad of terms may be helpful. Visual literacy is the attribute we would hope to find in every well-educated, totally literate adult in our society. Visual communication is what this person is exposed to and, when appropriate, uses himself. Visual technology is what makes visual communication possible, and changes in visual technology alter the character of visual communication.

It is also important to note that Visual literacy is a total kind of literacy. After all, even verbal literacy rests on the

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[7]International Visual Literacy Association, Rochester: University of Rochester, 1969. (Policy Paper)

capacity of the eye to read the written or printed symbols that we use to represent spoken words. Just as it would be difficult for a person to become verbally literate who cannot hear, so it is also difficult for a person to become visually literate who cannot see. In fact, any substantial sense deprivation makes true visual literacy impossible. It is the interrelationship of visual literacy and messages received or created in other sensory tracts that makes this kind of total literacy possible.

Finally, it is important to understand that any inquiry into visual literacy and its impact on the learning and development of children begins from a body of questions rather than from a body of knowledge. Despite the growing body of research on television viewing behavior, growth in cognitive development through television, and so forth, we may search in vain for a body of knowledge, a content (explicit knowledge in systematic order), and in so doing, miss an important way of "knowing" and understanding a new level of conceptual awareness which we may term "visual languaging."

The broad hope of visual literacy and the systematic uses of television for learning is that it will provide opportunities for students to relate experiences using both visual and verbal language models. Both are then seen as acceptable and appropriate tools to translate and interpret personal experience. Training in the uses of television has provided valuable insights into the language power of children. The child's ability to control the grammatical core, phonemic system and basic contentive vocabulary of verbal language has challenged linguists to examine parallel awarenesses in the child's acquisition of visual skills.

Visual literacy study has its roots in the earliest work of the perceptual psychologists. The study of perception within the framework of psychology has led to periodic controversy about the nature of perception. Historically, this controversy is exemplified by the extreme positions of the empiricist and nativist. On one end of the continuum the empiricist, as represented by John Locke, theorized that the mind is a tabula rasa at birth. This "blank tablet" is imprinted with all the sensations that are experienced by the organism making the mental content of the human mind a product of experience. At the opposite end of the continuum, the nativist, represented by Descartes, believed that certain mental capacities were innate properties of the human organism. This controversy fits into the broader issue often termed the nature-nurture debate. At our present stage of enlightenment, we regard this issue as really a pseudocontroversy. In other words, neither position is entirely correct, but, rather, the effects of experience working on the innate organism produce man as he exists today. In reference to the study of perception, we can say that man has some innate perceptual tendencies which are acted upon by the individual's experience resulting in the phenomenon known as perception. The study of perception within the framework of experiential psychology utilized techniques rigidly controlling such factors as subject's contact with environment and systematic deprivation have led to a rich heritage of stumbling, blindfolded rodents and pigeons. The bottom line: the deprivation of early visual experience can and does lead to visual problems in the later life of the organism, and

when an organism is visually enriched, especially in early life, it appears to be more successful in visual tasks in later life. Thus a program of visual enrichment can enable compensatory or accelerated learning if effectively implemented.

Much of perceptual research would suggest that youngsters who approach the formal school with enlarged retinas and heightened expectations bring rich and varied visual experiences to the process of formal learning. If these experiences are ever tapped as a resource for learning by teachers is quite another, and perhaps more revealing question.

III. TELEVISION AND THE CHILD: MORE THAN MERE ENTERTAINMENT

Most studies of television viewing by young children suggest that children of different ages respond quite differently to the same television programs. Katz[8] has argued the need to concentrate attention less on what the media do to people than on what people do with the media. The "uses" approach assumes that people's interests, their values and their social roles are pre-potent, and that people selectively "fashion" what they see and hear to these interests. What qualities in the younger child are likely to be most important when he discusses television? Piaget has suggested that chronological age, above all factors, critically determines the ways in which children respond to their environments. It would seem reasonable to suggest that chronological age will also determine the ways in which children respond to television. There may be value, therefore, in attempting to systematically relate Piaget's development theories to the ways in which children of different ages respond to television programming.

A personal reason for conducting systemic research of this nature is to more broadly inform my own intuitions about programming, including pre-program design. Since 1973 my own work has led to the development of two very different programs for children. After considerable effort, and the support of television professionals who shared my concerns, both programs are currently in national syndication.

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[8] D. Katz, Mass Communication Research and the Study of Culture, Studies in Public Communication, 2, 1-6 (1959)

It may be helpful to briefly examine Piaget's work concerning the child's cognitive development. Piaget's life work has been concerned with the evaluation of the various ways in which children of different chronological ages both think about and perceive their environments. Contrary to the notion that children are 'little adults,' Piaget has pointed the way to the conception of the child's world as very different from the adult's notion of the world. Both Piaget and Freud argue that it is difficult for adults to comprehend the ways in which the young child sees the world. At a certain stage in development, children begin to think as do adults, but prior to this stage, children think in very different ways than do adults, and further, these ways are lost to the child when he grows up.

Piaget argues that the child progresses through four major stages in intellectual development. From birth until about eighteen months is the sensory-motor period. According to Piaget, the infant starts with uncoordinated impressions from different senses so that the infant cannot distinguish between sensory stimulation and his own reflex responses to such stimulation. Piaget refers to this mode of thought as egocentrism, whereby the child conceives of himself as the center of events and as causal in all occurrences which surround him. The process of distinction between internal events and external events proceeds slowly so that during the rest of the sensory-motor period, the child gradually achieves sense and motor coordination. Thus the child learns to move his arms in a non-random manner and is able to reach out for, and touch objects which are distant from him but which are visible to him.

In the second major stage, the pre-operational thought stage (from an average, eighteen months to six/seven years), the achievements made in the sensory-motor stage are repeated at a symbolic and verbal level. Starting at a point where a child can envision objects which are not visible--and will look for a ball if it is hidden--the child learns that words can symbolize those objects and language can be further developed to express relationships between himself and other objects.

However, because of egocentrism in thought, the child is likely to think in binary ways during the pre-operational thought stage. The child cannot group or sort objects on the basis of the common characteristics attributed to them by adults. The child classifies, we might think, in ways which are incomprehensible to us. Two objects such as an apple and a key are seen as similar because they are together in a particular space, or because he saw them both together. Perhaps the most clear example of such binary thought is given by the problem of serialization. If children are asked to place a number of rods of different lengths into order, from smallest to longest, the pre-operational thought child will compare every rod with every other rod. These children will compare many pairs of rods until the task is done. A child in the concrete operations stage (aged six/seven to eleven/twelve years) will immediately select the shortest rod in the whole group, followed in turn by the second smallest rod and so on. This latter child is, therefore, able to cope with concepts such as largest and smallest whereas younger children cannot. Children aged three to five years are, therefore,

likely to perceive no shades of grey in television characters who will be perceived as either all good or all bad.

During the pre-operational thought stage the child, because he thinks egocentrically, is unable to perceive events from any other point of view but his own. Children during this stage, therefore, cannot fully differentiate between internal experiences, such as dreams, and external experiences, such as television. The young child believes that his dreams are in the room where everybody can see them. With regard to television research, it would appear that young children will consider that television is terribly real, because the child believes that television programs, like dreams, are part of his inner life. In extreme cases it is likely that these children will imagine that television characters are their friends and will come to talk with them at night. Piaget's concept of the young child's egocentric thought should lead one to expect that young children will believe what they see on television, in part because it is impossible for them to imagine that people are capable of acting dramatic parts. Similarly, both puppets and cartoon characters are likely to be thought of as alive and real. Evidence will be presented here which supports such a view. However, not all children in the pre-operational thought stage react in the same way to television, since the child gradually grows less egocentric in thought as he progressively grows older during this stage. Consequently the child's belief that everything seen on television is real will progressively decrease as he grows older and gradually distinguishes between reality and fantasy.

The young child's egocentric thought should lead to a point of view whereby the child can very easily imagine that either he or his

friends are involved in the television programs. If the young child is unable, in technical terms, to distinguish between events which take place within him and events which take place independently of him, then that child is likely to think that he is involved in television presentations. A slight paradox enters the argument here; many authors argue that young children identify with television characters. When a person identifies with a television character it is thought that he lives through the experiences of that character in that particular film. Now, should the child be unable to admit to any standpoint other than his own, it would seem reasonable to expect that the young child will put himself in the film alongside the other characters rather than viewing events through the eyes of one of the film heroes. As will be seen, evidence to support this latter view is available.

In addition, children in the pre-operational thought stage cannot reverse the constituents in a chain of reasoning. Perhaps this inability is best reflected in Piaget's famous jug and water experiments. If two identical jugs are filled to the same level with liquid and then poured into a short fat jug and a long thin jug, the child will deny that there is the same amount of liquid in the fat jug as in the thin jug. It is argued that the reason for this is that the child concentrates his attention only on one perceptual aspect of the liquid, namely its height or its width, and if these differ the amounts of liquid are thought to be different. Further, it is argued that if the child cannot reverse the operation--that is the child cannot imagine what would happen if the liquid was poured back from the thin and the fat jugs to the original identical

jugs--he is unlikely to admit that the amounts of liquid in the two jugs are the same. If the young child is unable to reverse the operations he has seen, it would seem reasonable to expect that the young child will not perceive that the story of a film will have a beginning, a middle and an end. Hence, the young child is unlikely to have many ideas concerning the plot seen in a television film. Piaget argues that there are inherent limitations on development at each stage which are partly due to the stage of maturity of the individual's nervous system. We can, therefore, expect that some quite dramatic differences will be noted in the plot comprehension of five- and seven-year-old children to the same television program.

At approximately six/seven years, the child commences to think as does an adult. Miller[9] has labelled this transformation a 'cognitive revolution,' which many critics consider to be too dramatic a description of this transformation. The stage which lasts from six/seven to eleven/twelve years is called by Piaget the concrete operations stage. The word 'concrete' is deliberately emphasized because Piaget argues that children of these ages can only cope in adult ways with events and problems which are immediately before them. Children of these ages cannot solve hypothetical problems which are described verbally or other problems which are not concrete. A child can, between the ages of six/seven and eleven/twelve years, deflect a billiard ball from a cushion into a pocket, but he cannot visualize a solution to such a problem if presented to him diagrammatically, nor can he describe the reason as to why he

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[9]G. A. Miller, Psychology: The Science of Mental Life. Harmondsworth: Penguin Press, 1962.

hit the billiard ball at a particular place on the cushion in order that it should rebound into the pocket. Children aged eleven years and over can express the answer to this problem in words, and will point out that the angle of deflection is equal to the angle at which the ball hits the cushion. The six/seven-year-old child will, however, admit that the same amount of liquid is present in two differently shaped jugs because he is now able to mentally reverse the pouring operation. Indeed, the six/seven-year-old child can cope with most problems which are immediately before him. It is only in the formal operations stage (twelve years and older) that the child is able to reverse hypothetical rather than concrete operations. Further, it is only during adolescence that operations become completely abstracted from all concrete instances and formal logical arguments, to which facts are less relevant, can be conducted. As might be imagined, children in the concrete and formal operation stages show marked progress in the understanding of television programs. Due to a lack of space, such progress is not mapped out here.

Let us now examine the available research in the light of the three broad hypotheses outlined above, namely that children aged up to five years (a) will perceive television characters as either all good or all bad, (b) will confuse the reality and fantasy of television programs, and (c) will not understand the story of a television film. First, is there any evidence that the television experiences of the under sixes are more binary than those of children aged seven and older? In a remarkable study by Gomberg,[10] the

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[10]A. W. Gomberg, "The Four-Year-Old Child and Television: The Effects on His Play at School," Unpublished Ed.D. dissertation. Columbia University, 1961.

reactions of four-year-olds to television programs were assessed. She systematically recorded all the play perceptibly influenced by television shown by fifty-six four-year-old children in three different play school centers in New York. When talking to these four-year-old children, a number of conceptions of the television world became apparent. Some of the four-year-olds' binary conceptions of television are listed below:

1. The people on television are either all good or all bad.
2. All the cowboys are good people.
3. All the Indians (except Tonto) are bad.
4. All the men in the army are good.

Such opinions, which Gomberg maintains are generally accepted, indicate that young children conceive all television characters in black and white terms. As is to be expected from Piaget's work, children's reactions are likely to be of an all-or-none character. In other words children of four years (and indeed many older children), will perceive no shades of grey, no conflict between the hero's desire to catch rather than kill the villain. Such conceptions lead on to some very interesting specific misconceptions, which were less widely held by the four-year-olds studies by Gomberg such as:

1. Bad people bleed, but not good people.
2. A sheriff may not be caught.
3. The good guy wears a white hat or rides a white horse, and the bad man wears black or rides a black horse.
4. A bad man never does anything that is good.
5. The job of cowboys is to kill bad people or Indians.

It is debatable whether such conceptions are restricted purely to four-year-olds. One's impression is that many of these conceptions

are shared by both film producers and comic illustrators. Detailed questioning of adults may lead to the discovery of similar misconceptions in their minds. More sinister, though, is the carving of the world into black and white, and more sinister still are the unfavorable opinions that young children have of the "black" characters. Society may perhaps question the right of both the comic authors and the television producers to encourage and perpetrate such conceptions. Perhaps the most dangerous of these conceptions are those relating to aggression. For example, Gomberg reports the following common conception of aggression:

1. All the good people have to kill the bad people.
2. You can't really talk to a bad guy--you must shoot him.
3. All the heroes kill only the bad guys.
4. A gun means you are strong.
5. Only the good guys should have a gun.
6. The bad guys always started the fight.
7. All quarrels between good and bad guys end in killing.
8. Settling quarrels with a gun was neither good nor bad--it was how everybody did it.

Such notions led to some conceptions specifically held by certain children which were of similar interest:

1. If bad people try to hurt you, call your mother and she will get a gund and kill him.
2. Every good person loves little children. To protect children, he must kill the bad people.
3. Dynamite is used to blow up a country or to kill bad people.
4. Policemen ride in airplanes and police cars and kill the bad robbers and Indians.
5. When in trouble, call Superman.

Once again television has given children a view of the world where aggression, and usually death, is seen as the normal method for resolving conflict. Granted that children's ways of thought develop considerably, there is still a danger that these modes of thoughts will persist in later life. A very large number of adults watch similar television programs as do four-year-olds, a habit which possibly reflects on a desire to return to childhood accompanied, perhaps, by those conceptions of the world which Freud correctly labelled 'predicate'--mere association between two overtly similar characteristics, i.e. that black is bad and that red hair indicates a firesome temper. Four-year-olds equate black with 'badness' and white with 'goodness', and unless such conceptions are later changed these residual associations may persist and may not aid, for example, race relations. The danger, if such it be, is accentuated since few of us can remember how or what we thought in childhood. According to many theorists, including Freud, these experiences are later likely to shape our whole personalities. One of the aims of psychoanalysis is to relive many of the critical experiences that the young child has with his parents. We just don't know whether the young child's experience of television are as critical--one suspects not. However, it would seem safer for television producers to err on the side of caution. This is particularly true for children aged up to five or six years, because the adult cannot remember how the world appeared to him before the cognitive revooution. Memories stored in terms of the childhood concepts became almost inconceivable after such revolutions; therein lies the source of much of our childhood amnesia, our inability to recall our earliest experiences. Should Gomberg be right, we are storing some conceptions of the world

derived from television which we perhaps should not store.

It is interesting to note that the children Gomberg talked to were largely obsessed with guns. Some television codes of violence dictate that violence involving guns is more acceptable than violence involving hands and knives. If aggression involving hands or knives were shown, it is possible that viewers would see a greater build-up to the final aggressive act, and further may see the consequences of aggression in more detail than a man simply falling down when shot. If children see the consequences of aggression as well as the 'horror' of seeing aggression involving knives, they may be less inclined to view such aggression as either fun or as the natural method by which conflict is resolved. Similarly, realistic fights rather than cowboy fights may well show children the actual consequences of fighting. An individual hit hard in the stomach should, perhaps gasp and lie on the floor for a while instead of springing back to break a balsa-wood chair over his antagonist's head.

While in favor of attempts to make experimental television programs as outlined above, more research data is necessary before such programs can be screened with complete confidence. More than one Gomberg study is certainly required, as are journals prepared to publish non-statistical material. Too often journals only publish studies which employ the most sophisticated methodology and yet merely present findings which are either obvious or for which the relevance to real-life problems is, at least, tenuous. Journals don't seem yet prepared to publish studies like Gomberg's which employ casual methodology and yet present data which more directly 'tap' the real world.

Gomberg found television-inspired play varying in amount from 11 percent of all play in one center to 60 percent in another. About 54 percent of all the four-year-olds showed some television influence in their play. Other roles enacted in the dramatic play of four-year-olds were Lone Ranger, Mickey Mouse, Popeye, Sheriff, Spectator at TV shows, Superman, Tonto and Television Weather Man. Gomberg comments that television gave the children a common element for social play. However, even children's play reflected binary thinking--that is, wherever a television symbol was used, the play took on a stereotyped character. They used their equipment in a set and stereotyped way, they walked or ran in a set manner. The children spoke in stereotyped phrases. "Whatever their background, there was, because of television, a commonality to their play," said Gomberg. As Piaget has commented, prior to the age of six and seven years, understanding between children occurs only where there is contact between two identical mental schemas already existing in each child. The egocentric child cannot seek or find in the other child's mind some basis on which to build a conversation. Television, it would appear, provides different children with identical mental schemes which enhance the possibility of co-operative play.

The second hypothesis suggested that young children will believe what they see on television as real and true. Older children will be less likely to believe what they see on television, because they are more able to delineate fantasy from reality. Such a hypothesis essentially states that the older child will be less egocentric in thought than the younger child. Once again Gomberg provides some evidence which supports this suggestion. One popular conception held by four-year-olds was that 'if it is on television it is correct.'

Similarly, Schramm, et al point out that "to young children, television is terribly real."[11] If children are unable to delineate between experiences which take place inside them, such as dreams, and the experiences of the external world, such as television, they are likely to believe, to some extent, that they are part and parcel of the television programs they watch. One of two examples might help to make this point clear. Gomberg cites evidence of two children who were, in her opinion, particularly confused about the reality of the characters they watched. To one child, Superman was more than a make-believe character, he was a hero, a champion and the man she would eventually marry. She said of him:

> 'Superman comes to visit me all the time. He brings me presents. He brings me a sewing machine, and he brings me a teddy bear and ice cream, and he takes me flying wherever he goes. He always kisses me goodnight and then I go to bed.'

Gomberg found this girl was a lonely child and she had incorporated Superman into her fantasy as other children incorporate imaginary companions. Similarly, the small boy who believed only bad people bled, said when he cut his finger as he became hysterical, 'I'm not bad, I'm not bad, I can't bleed.' Clearly neither of these children were delineating with clarity between their inner and external worlds.

Taken overall, results suggest that Piaget's child development theories provide a useful framework to study children's viewing behaviors. In summary,

1. Young children (2-6) see a series of separate and fragmentary incidents rather than a coherent story in a television program.

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[11] Wilbur Schramm, Jack Lyle and Edwin Parker, Television In The Lives of Our Children, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961, p. 162.

2. The content of these incidents suggests that children will see either all good or all evil characters.

3. Young children (2-6) tend to believe implicitly what they see on television to be real.

In the Concrete Operations Stage, from six to eleven years, Piaget notes that a cognitive revolution takes place, sometime between the age of five and seven. In this new stage the child is no longer exclusively concerned with what he sees immediately before him since he can use operations in thought. Therefore, a critical awareness about television and other forms of visual languaging occurs at this stage.

In the Formal Operations Stage, from eleven years onwards, the child lives in the present, but also in the future and the domain of the hypothetical. It is only during adolescence that operations become abstracted from concrete instances, marking the final beginning of the end of egocentrism in thought. Adolescents may be expected to share the adults' conception of the world at this stage.

But regardless of the influence of age on children's television viewing, parallel peer-group and parental influences impact the amount of pre-school age television viewing. The more one's parents watch television, the more the child watches. The more positive parents' attitude toward television, the more the child watches. And the more parents feel they derive from television viewing, the more purposeful the viewing experience of the child may be.

As the research on television viewing grows, the debates on the social influence of television deepen. Even five years ago it would have been possible to review the serious research on television

viewing behavior in perhaps a week. Today, there are enough key studies to keep the student of research profitably engaged for many months. One recent study directed by Rand Corporation scientist, George Comstock, developed a comprehensive schema of ten specialized research bibliographies and a useful taxonomy of the literature which runs to three volumes.[12]

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to detail the range of current research the major research effort of Comstock and his colleagues has identified research priorities within the scientific community. The number one priority is television and the socialization of young persons, encompassing four areas--prosocial behavior, role socialization, political socialization and antisocial behavior. A fifth area, cognitive learning, including the effects of day-to-day "ordinary" television viewing on young persons' acquisition of facts and intellectual skills, shows signs of renewed interest by researchers. Parallel initiatives to refine methodological approaches will also be considered.

If teachers and parents are to utilize television as it is and as it might be, then research on the current public policy for children's television, including the viability of industry self-regulation and federal regulatory reform are also important aspects of research and policy formation. Because research is an orderly and disciplined process of asking and answering questions in a publicly verifiable manner clear priorities need to be set by all who share in the design of research and in the objectives of total language learning.

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[12]George Comstock, Television and Human Behavior: The Key Studies, Rand Report R-1747-CF, June 1975.

IV. GREAT EXPECTATIONS: WHERE DO WE GO NOW?

In this paper it has been my attempt, however uneven, to explore the diverse impacts of television on the development of children, against the larger and more complex landscape features of society and the process of schooling. Few would disagree that television is severally compound of techniques of recording, processing and transmission of information, of entertainment, news and market vehicle, and of a cultural medium which overlaps and interpenetrates the wide spectrum of other media in the society.

At the individual level we are only just beginning to understand how complex and diverse television messages are "understood" by children. In truth, beyond the measures of recall and remembering, we know little about the long-term, and often more profound impacts of the medium upon the individual learner.

To many young people television may be one of the few entirely predictable events in their lives. Joyce Maynard, in a poignant recollection of growing up old in the 60's, Looking Back, writes:

> "What I acquired in my years of Kildare-watching was not a set of ethics but a set of TV absolutes, the ten commandments of the screen, by which I knew that if a hero falls in love with somebody, she'll have to die, and that, while mean criminals can get sent to prison, good-ones-gone-astray must end up instead, with bullets through their hearts, because for them it must be all or nothing, happiness or death, and prison seems too inconclusive a finale. I learned not how things are, but how things are on television, and once having learned that, far from being bored at having lost all feeling of suspense, the need to watch grew stronger. Like the pleasure you get from doing math problems over and over, once you've

> learned the theorem that proves them. I watched to see the patterns I'd become aware of confirmed. I found it marvelously comforting to feel that at least something in life could be predictable."[13]

If we look to television with an eye to change the medium we are forced to study the essential paradigm of the medium. Many of us today may wish to change television, to make it conform more to our own images, our own expectations. My own work as an administrator and teacher has forced me to become a student of organizational change. If we expect any change in our profession, or in the way we understand television's unique potential to extend and enrich learning and teaching, then we must examine the "culture" of our profession and the "paradigm" of our research and teaching.

In a marvelous book called The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Thomas Kuhn wrote about how advances are made in science. His basic concept is that there's something called a "paradigm" in science, something akin to a Zietgeist, or a climate of opinion which governs the choices made. Here are his words: "The constellation of values and beliefs shared by the members of a scientific community, that determines the choice, problems which are regarded as significant, and the approaches to be adopted in attempting to solve it."

Kuhn's point is that the men who revolutionized science were always those who changed the paradigm. One of the interesting changes in paradigms today, for example, is in the social sciences: the deep concern with the conscious, introspective phenomenological aspects of personality or the subtle shift away from logical positivism toward intervention research. The professors are saying,

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[13]Joyce Maynard, Looking Back, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1973, p. 58.

"The subjective consciousness is just your feeling, let's talk about objectivity." The students are saying, "I know what I feel." (Or rather, I know what I feel.) Their revulsion against the strategy of truth based on symbols that are both verbal and quantitative is very big. Currently, there is a real collision of these two paradigms right now, one based on the more accepted canons of science, the other based on subjective feelings.

In the area of television and its agenda for research, most teachers of English have been deeply involved in the intricacies of the sentence, or particularly attentive to the mysteries of the flannelboard. Our professional contributions to television research have been largely lost in the literature, as well most of them should be.

Do teachers of English and English Education have a stake in television and its growth? I think so. However most of the time we are so comfortable in our own private domain assumptions that we barely lift our head above the small wells of self-esteem to seriously study parallel initiatives in television research.

My own life has been marked by long periods of deep concern about the fusion of theory and practice, with the hope that articulate vision, language and rationality were the only ways we could ever reach anything like a civilization. And a conviction that the basic "two cultures" problem in the world is not the one that C. P. Snow revived between scientists and humanists, but between men who had knowledge and no power, and men who had power but no knowledge. In all of this I echo Warren Bennis who has publicly hoped that the men who wrote history and the men who made history might have a broadening affinity.

The teacher of language in this decade and beyond must stop relying on slogans or abstractions; he must decide how to conceive man. He will have to decide if and when he can take the risk of intentionally exploring the instructional purposes and characteristics of all of messages of the media. He must probe and try to understand what messages impinge on him and his pupils every day. In so doing, he will begin to approach a new literacy, an understanding of the bombardment of information which makes it difficult to coherently respond to the bewildering simultaneity of events, which makes it hard to distinguish foreground from background, fantasy from fact. If he uses television, a teacher must be critical and demanding at a time when the medium itself often seems to be comfortable with a collective and profitable mediocrity. Having learned from Piaget and others how viewing experiences become intellectualized and felt, the teacher of language should be able to distinguish teaching from mere conditioning or training. Television experiences can be a valid bridge for teacher and student, for much of the mystery and challenge of teaching is found, fundamentally, in the connection between words and images generated by the teacher and the private launching of learning activities by the student. With an informed use of television to enrich teaching and facilitate learning, we may find that with consciousness about television's newly tested potentials may come conscience, the distinction between what television is and what it ought to be, and the will to act purposely to make it all better.

If one transcends the special rhythms of research, we may see new purposes for television. Maybe what we all need to do is to

wake up to the medium's largely untested potential. Maybe here is where we are--where America was at the beginning and perhaps should always stay: at the stage where the day looks marvelous ahead, where the promises sound best, where the fields ahead are greenest.

These are the signs: music heard and then not heard; color seen and then more faded; the shape that is noble and then, well, not so sharp as it was.

These are the signs--who knows of what: the herons cry in confusion before they start, and sing when they are flying.

Good flying to you all.